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Contact: Kendall Wingrove
517-373-8880

Senate Passes Minimum Wage Increase: Senator Sikkema Calls It ‘Fair and Workable’

Lansing — The Michigan Senate, spurred by the Republican majority, today passed an increase in the state’s minimum wage law. The surprise vote received unanimous support.

“This is a fair and workable approach to the issue of the minimum wage,” said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming. “It will provide a sensible wage hike to workers while at the same time ensuring Michigan job providers are not saddled with onerous job-killing provisions that are being pushed by supporters of a constitutional amendment on the minimum wage.”

The proposal would raise the minimum wage to \$6.95 per hour on Oct. 1, 2006. It provides for an increase to \$7.15 on July 1, 2007 and \$7.40 on July 1, 2008.

Sen. Sikkema noted that Michigan’s minimum wage has not been increased in nine years. He also points out that the Senate-passed proposal is actually higher than the increase being put forth by those who wish to make annual, mandatory minimum wage increases part of Michigan’s constitution.

The bill, which passed the Senate 35-0, does not include the annual escalator in the wage supported by the union-backed sponsors of the constitutional amendment.

“Pure and simple the automatic escalator is a job killer,” Sikkema said. “Particularly in the tourism and hospitality industries this automatic escalator clause would have a devastating effect. Our fragile economy in Michigan is having enough difficulties without heaping additional annual costs to job providers.”

Sikkema noted that if the union-backed proposal calling for the automatic escalator to be placed in the constitution does reach the ballot those voting for it would in fact be voting to cut the minimum wage from the level the Senate passed.

The bill will now go to the state House of Representatives where Sikkema hopes for quick passage.

“I look forward to the governor signing this bill which is fair for both workers and job providers,” Sikkema concluded.

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Note: Audio of Sen. Sikkema speaking about the minimum-wage hike is available on the Senate Majority Audiowire, at www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/audiowire.